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PROSPECTUS
OF
A Review of Books,
ON A
NEW PLAN,
ADAPTED TO GENERAL UTILITY.

*To be published 1st January, 1805, and continued Monthly,
Price One Shilling and Sixpence,*

THE
ECLECTIC REVIEW.

"Cicero gives us an account of the various opinions of philosophers in his age: But he himself was of the ECLECTIC sect; and chose out of each of them such positions, as, in his judgment, came nearest to the truth."

Watts on the Improvement of the Mind.

*Quid verum atque decens, curo et rogo, et omnis in hoc sum:
Condo et compono, quæ mox depromere possim.
Ac ne fortè roges, quo me duce, quo Lare tuter,
Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri,
Quo me cunque rapit tempestas, deferor hospes.*

HORATII, Ep. 1.

THE present multiplicity and variety of literary productions, must render every intelligent reader desirous of assistance, to form a just estimate of the general state of Literature, and to select those performances which may best requite his attention. A Review of books founded on just principles, and free from the influence of party-spirit, can alone effectually answer this purpose. If warped by interested motives, or contaminated with important errors, works of periodical criticism become baneful, instead of beneficial, in proportion to the talents of their conductors, and to the extent of their circulation.

Reviews have gradually increased in number, magnitude, and price; and competition has naturally prompted to exertion. The ECLECTIC Review is projected, not with a wish to augment the number of works on criticism, nor with a presumption of surpassing all its predecessors in literary merit; but with the hope of rendering essential service to the

most valuable interests of the public. To blend with impartial criticism an invariable regard to moral and religious principle, is its leading object; and with a view to more extensive usefulness, it will pursue a different track from that in which Reviews have hitherto been conducted. Compositions of this description have usually undertaken to characterize every production of the press; and the profession is still reiterated, although its futility has long since been demonstrated by experience. The ECLECTIC REVIEW declines to attempt what cannot be accomplished. It proposes, therefore, to *select* those departments of literature which are most generally interesting and instructive; and to take proper notice of all new works on the subjects thus selected. On other topics, whether of science or amusement, those writings will be distinguished, an account of which may be conducive to public utility. The more abstruse branches of criticism, to which, indeed, justice could be rendered only by a Review restricted to the purpose, will not be obtruded on our readers. The refuse of the circulating-library, and of the theatre, will be excluded: while every vehicle of useful information and rational entertainment, under whatever form it appears, will receive appropriate attention.

On this plan, a Review is presented to the Public at a lower charge, than would be compatible with any attempt, however imperfect, at universal criticism; while greater justice may be done to the articles it comprises, than appears to be practicable on a more extended scale. Numerous and respectable classes of society, not of the learned professions, but possessed of general intelligence, and laudably desirous of practical information, may thus obtain satisfaction, without useless expense: and the heads of well regulated families and schools, may communicate literary instruction to the young and inexperienced, without danger of inflaming their passions, or of corrupting their principles.

The Editors have fully ascertained, that a Work of this description has long and earnestly been desired. They are aware, also, that the Public may reasonably demand an unequivocal avowal of the sentiments it is designed to inculcate. Without hesitation, therefore, they declare, that while they venerate, in all, the rights of private conscience, they are themselves cordially attached to the doctrines of Christianity, as expressed in the Articles of the Church of England; and to the political principles of the British constitution, as by law established. This ground, though happily the hereditary portion of every Briton, has not been chosen by them without the most serious enquiry,

enquiry, and mature deliberation: satisfied, therefore, that it is tenable against every attack; they resolve, stedfastly, but temperately, to maintain it, from whatever quarter it may be assailed.

But while they disdain to sacrifice the most certain and important truths to a spurious and affected moderation, they wish to evince a genuine and universal candour, respecting subjects on which the best and the wisest of mankind are divided. The temper and argument, the composition and expression, of the works they review, will be calmly appreciated, without regard to the party from which they originate.

The subjects to which a stated and general attention will be paid, are History, natural, civil, and ecclesiastical; Biography; Geography, including voyages, travels, and topography; familiar Astronomy; Natural and Moral Philosophy; Theology, in all its branches; Education; General Politics, and Political Economy; Philology, chiefly with reference to the English language, and universal Grammar; and all classical compositions, in Poetry and Prose, that appear to be unexceptionable in their moral tendency.

In the first and principal department of every Number, will be given a distinct and comprehensive view of works of superior importance. Others, that can claim only transient notice, will be referred to a Descriptive Catalogue.

To these leading articles will be added, a copious list of Books recently published in the British islands, or imported from other countries; together with Intelligence of literary productions from various quarters of the globe, and of works preparing for the press. For this purpose, correspondence with persons of eminence, learning and character, in several foreign countries, has been established.

A portion of each Number will also be reserved for such Original Correspondence as may appear interesting to the commonwealth of letters; including what additional information may occasionally be communicated by authors who have passed under review; and though it is hoped this work will never be justly chargeable with misrepresentation, or with acrimony, yet should such an inadvertence happen, it shall readily be corrected by the admission of reasonable and temperate explanations, or modest appeals to the candour of an impartial Public, by writers who may think they suffer under these, or other literary grievances.

It is not the design of this work, to cast into the same critical mould every species of materials. Analysis or Synthesis, abstract or extracts, incidental or general observations, will be applied, according to the nature of the article under examination.

SELECTION

SELECTION being the distinguishing characteristic of this Review, the propriety of restricting it to a smaller compass than that which is commonly allotted to similar works, is too obvious to require a comment. The wish of its conductors, to adapt it in every respect to public utility, has inclined them also to offer it at the lowest price that is likely to be consistent with respectability. Persons who are conversant with undertakings of this kind, need not be informed that they are attended with heavy expenses: but, as pecuniary emolument is not the object of the *ECLECTIC REVIEW*, each Number will include a greater quantity, in proportion to its price, than is usual in works of periodical criticism. It is expected from the candour of the Public, that no unfavourable judgment will be prematurely formed of its literary merit, on account of its comparative cheapness. The novelty, and apparent utility of the plan, the liberality, and evident importance of the object, together with the means which are used to render this Work worthy of general attention, induce the Proprietors to hope that its circulation will prove adequate to indemnify and encourage their exertions, at least while its execution demonstrates that their invariable aim is to unite the advancement of literature with the welfare of mankind.

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PREFACE.

THE ECLECTIC REVIEW having been instituted solely for the benefit of its readers, has been published at the lowest price that could be affixed to it, in order to increase its usefulness to the best interests of mankind, by enlarging its circulation among various classes of society. That the manner in which it has been conducted, is consistent with the original professions of its supporters, they hope will be acknowledged by every candid and attentive reader. The cordial testimonies of approbation, which have been received from many of the most respectable characters in the United Kingdom, and from others far beyond its limits, demand the most grateful acknowledgement; and the constantly progressive sale, which has surpassed the expectations of its projectors, affords a pleasing confirmation of its general acceptance, and an encouraging prospect of very extensive utility. The support which has thus been given to the undertaking, both enables and stimulates the conductors of it to adopt every means that may tend to render it worthy of universal attention; and the increasing literary assistance which
has

has been afforded, emboldens them to believe, that neither the expectations nor the wishes of their readers will be liable to disappointment.

Desirous of avoiding a multiplication of slender volumes, in order that no expense, however small, may be unnecessarily imposed on purchasers of any class, the supporters of this Review have determined to continue the first twelve numbers in a form that will admit of being bound together; yet, as a book of nearly a thousand pages may by many be thought inconvenient, it is distinguished into two Parts, which the possessor can unite, or separate, according to his choice. At the close of the year, a General Index, beside that of the Second Part, will be given, which may be substituted for the partial indexes, by persons who do not object to a bulky octavo.

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P R E F A C E.

THE Conductors of the ECLECTIC REVIEW are not strangers to the anxious sensations with which a literary work, especially if deemed of importance, is usually presented to the public: but, in the present instance, these are mitigated by a consciousness of the upright, benevolent, and disinterested motives, in which this undertaking originated. The cordial expressions of approbation and good will, and the liberal offers of support, which have been received from various quarters, since the circulation of the Prospectus, dissipate every apprehension that the work might fail through want of a general concern for its success: while the zealous co-operation of individuals, eminent for literary attainments and respectability of character, encourages our hope, that the execution will prove worthy of the design, and of the expectations which have been raised of its utility.

On this subject, however, it is the judgement of the Public which must, and which ought to decide. To that final and impartial tribunal the commencement of the work is cheerfully submitted; but not without a confidence, that its progress will be marked by considerable improvements. The object proposed will, however, be unalterable—public utility—utility of the highest kind—The advancement of general happiness, by the establishment of just principles of conduct. This, surely, is the most important purpose for which Literature can be employed; and no exertion can be deemed too great for its attainment. Even
A failure

failure in the attempt is not inglorious: *In magnis voluisse, sat est.*

Both the plan and the principles of our Review are indicated by its *Title*. No other than that of *ECLECTIC*, would have been equally appropriate. Sound was, therefore, sacrificed to sense: a sense, which the English motto, subjoined to the title, sufficiently explains. As, however, objections to our choice have been started, it seems necessary to premise some account of the origin of the term, which, at the same time, will illustrate the principles adopted for the conduct of the work.

Diogenes Laertius, who (probably in the second century of the Christian Era) compiled memoirs of eminent philosophers, remarks, at the close of his Proeme, that "a certain *ECLECTIC* Sect had recently been introduced by Potamon of Alexandria;" and that this Sect was so called, because it "*selected* from every other philosophical class whatever was best approved."

To this circumstance, Clement of Alexandria, a celebrated Christian Father, appears to refer in the following passage of his *Stromata*, lib. I. "By Philosophy, I do not mean the system of the Stoic, or the Platonic, the Epicurean, or the Aristotelian; but, every thing which has been justly maintained by any of these Sects, and which, by religious instruction, inculcates rectitude of manners; this *ECLECTIC* aggregate, I term Philosophy."

The good, the wise, and the great, of every age, have evidently adopted the same principle. Out of numerous instances that might be cited, none, perhaps, will be more suitable, or more generally acceptable, than the character of Dr. Jeremy Taylor, Bishop of Down, as described in his Funeral Sermon, by Dr. Rust, his successor in that See,

"He

"He was one of the ΕΚΑΕΚΤΙΚΟΙ," says his Right Reverend eulogist, "a sort of brave philosophers that Laertius speaks of, that did not addict themselves to any particular Sect, but ingeniously sought for *Truth* among all the wrangling schools. This was the spirit of that great man; he weighed men's *reasons*, and not their *names*; and was not scared with the ugly visors men usually put upon persons they dislike. He considered, that it is not likely any one party should wholly engross *Truth* to themselves; that obedience is the only way to knowledge; that God always, and only, teaches docile and ingenuous minds, that are willing to hear, and ready to obey according to their light. Such considerations as these made him impartial in his disquisitions, and give a due allowance to the *reasons* of his adversary, and contend for *Truth*, and not for *Victory*."

Such are the intentions of the Conductors and Supporters of the ECLECTIC REVIEW. Neither excluding nor admitting indiscriminately the sentiments of any party, religious or political, nor aiming at innovation, they select from all whatever appears to them to be sanctioned by reason, experience, and revelation. That the public might not doubt of our political and religious sentiments, we have avowed our cordial approbation both of the leading principles of the British Constitution, which happily combines the advantages of Monarchy, Aristocracy, and Democracy; and of the Doctrinal Articles of the Church of England, which we conceive to be congenial with those of the Kirk of Scotland, of the principal Churches of Europe and America, and of a vast majority of those Secessions which have arisen wherever Britons have dwelt. In every Communion, and under every civil Government, we rejoice to meet with tenets which we heartily approve, and can honestly applaud. Things, in which we differ from each other, we agree to leave undecided.

A *selective Plan* is adopted, in order to render this work more useful to the public at large ; and a stated selection of subjects, has been preferred to a fortuitous assemblage, of which a considerable portion might be useless to our Readers. At the same time, we are not restricted from including works of eminent merit, in *any* department of literature.

A few words on the spirit with which this work will be conducted, shall close our prefatory address. All national and personal reflections shall be excluded, as well as indiscriminate censure of any religious or political party whatever. The spleen, neither of writers nor of readers, will be gratified, by wanton abuse of authors, or of their works. We think, with Mr. Addison, that it is more characteristic of a genuine Critic, to point out beauties, than faults ; but we likewise admit, with Dr. Johnson, that it is the duty of criticism, neither to depreciate, nor to dignify, by partial representations ; but to hold out the light of *Reason*, whatever it may discover ; and to promulgate the determinations of *Truth*, whatever she shall dictate.

Such are our purposes, and though we may err in judgement, we pledge ourselves not to deviate from them wittingly, conscious that, if drawn by interest, or driven by influence, from the course we have marked, we should be peculiarly blameable. We shall only add that, as the Conductors of this work do not aim at emolument, and its pecuniary supporters do not require the prospect of gain for the risk of their property, the profits, when the expenses of it shall be discharged, are pledged, by a legal agreement, to be applied to the assistance of the New British and Foreign Bible Society, an Institution which has happily united in its support, Christians of every class and distinction in Britain.